

OPPOSE HB 5295, Slaughtering Rabbits for Food
SUPPORT SB 239, Ban Rodenticides

Dear Honorable Members of the Environment Committee,

On behalf of the members and supporters of the **House Rabbit Connection, Inc.** (HRC), a CT registered 501(c)3 animal rescue and official chapter of the **House Rabbit Society**, please accept this public hearing testimony in OPPOSITION to HB 5295—which promotes the slaughter of rabbits for food and in SUPPORT of SB 239 with Improvements.

I am absolutely appalled with the notion of raising and slaughtering rabbits for consumption and here's why... I have been involved with rabbit rescue for the past 2 decades. I have fostered over 30 rabbits and owned 10 of my own bunnies in that time frame. Rabbits have been the best pets I have ever owned. They are intelligent, social, can be spunky, mischievous and possess wonderful personalities.

- Rabbits are the third most adopted pet. Rabbits are no longer relegated to outdoor hutches but now share their homes with humans and other animals as part of the family. They are easily litter box trained, house broken, and can be free roaming. (1)
- Over the years the public has put a lot of direct pressure on companies to put an end to selling rabbits, using fur, animal testing in both labs and cosmetics, and rabbit meat for consumption.
- Both PetSmart and Petco stopped selling rabbits in their stores due to public pressure (2).
- Luxury designers such as Yves St. Laurent are going fur free stating "Stopping the use of fur is another step forward in our commitment to animal welfare and is in line with our commitment to sustainability." (3).
- More and more cosmetics companies are going cruelty free due to public pressure (4).
- Whole Foods dabbled with selling rabbit meat in their stores in 2015. However, because of a variety of factors, fueled by public demand, they discontinued the sales within weeks (5).
- Consumers are now demanding more plant-based options in their diets than ever before, not only for the health benefits but to also reduce animal suffering (6).
- Our rabbit rescue, the House Rabbit Connection adopts and fosters rabbits in both CT and MA.
- I work very closely with not only CT ACO's but many municipal animal shelters in the state. I have trained over 60 CT ACOs regarding recognizing domestic rabbits vs wild rabbits and how to capture domestic rabbits that have been set free by owners who no longer wanted to care for them. HRC takes them in to adopt out.

In closing: Undoubtedly, the trend has been moving away from animal exploitation and animal cruelty. In its place there has been a strong surge towards sustainability, kindness and compassion towards animals, and a commitment to animal welfare in all forms.

The writing is already on the wall. The public has spoken up time and time again that they no longer will remain silent when it comes to the mistreatment, abuse, and exploitation of the animals and pets they have come to adore as family members.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Marlene Wilhelm
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- The House Rabbit Connection, Inc., President
- The House Rabbit Society, Chapter Manager
- The House Rabbit Society, Educator

Footnotes on the following page:

1. <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/animals/article/rabbits-easter-animal-welfare-pets-rescue-bunnies#:~:text=Rabbits%20are%20the%20third%20most,care%20they%20need%2C%20their%20behaviors.>
2. <https://bobcutmag.com/2021/10/24/does-petsmart-sell-bunnies/#:~:text=Read%20more%20about%20Does%20Petsmart,to%20have%20for%20keeping%20them.>
3. <https://editorialist.com/fashion/fur-free-fashion-brands/>
4. <https://www.pcrm.org/ethical-science/animal-testing-and-alternatives/cruelty-free-cosmetics>
5. <https://www.foodnavigator-usa.com/Article/2015/09/21/Whole-Foods-Market-halts-sale-of-rabbit>
6. <https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/eat-more-plants-fewer-animals-2018112915198>

